



# SINI 4 Spotlight

Volume 2 Number 2

October 2011

*Happy October, everyone!* Does it feel good to have the first month of the new school year under your belt? I expect there were a few hiccups but your nimble feet and clever minds helped you get over them. Persistence, diligence, resilience – those are capacities we encourage among our students but they are no less essential for the teachers and administrators who work to educate them.

In this issue, I'll explain a message you'll receive soon from the *Steps* system regarding "coaching comments." Also, I've been responding to questions about the process and system by phone and email and I thought the answers and advice might be useful to others. This issue begins a collection of "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)" which will grow as we go through the year. One topic that came up recently was how to incorporate data analysis into the *Steps* process of assessing current status. In this newsletter you'll find an article that describes that issue and offers some suggestions for connecting inputs with outcomes. Finally, I tried to cluster the schools in the 2011 restructuring planning year cohort geographically and posted that list in this newsletter. If any of you would like to volunteer to schedule a regional face to face meeting for the teams in your region, get in touch with the others and with me and let's make it happen!

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## Coaching Comments

When you log onto *Steps to Success*, on the School Main page you see the group Consultants and Leaders at the bottom. In most cases, you'll see your principal listed and perhaps your school's process manager, and also in the row, Consultant to the School, you'll see me listed as "lead coach."



In the *Steps* (Indistar®) system, the role of coach has special responsibilities. As described in the book, *Coaching for School Improvement: A Guide for Coaches and their Supervisors* ([www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)), the coach's primary function is to provide "pressures and supports" to help the team throughout its engagement in a continuous improvement process, such as *Steps to Success*.

In addition to providing 'pressures and supports' in a face to face situation, the *Steps to Success* system allows the coach to view the work posted by the team and to provide feedback remotely to help the team make best use of the process.

Over the next couple of weeks, the principal and/or process manager will receive an email from ADI saying that you've received a coaching comment and providing a link to the page where the comment is posted. I will be doing a first review of your work with *Steps to Success* with a primary focus on the descriptions you posted of current level of implementation. I'll offer some 'formative' feedback – clarifying questions, suggestions for making your evidence more robust and persuasive.

I'll be paying particular attention to the evidence you provide to support your claim that a particular practice is "fully implemented." Remember: you will likely find *many* practices that you feel are fully implemented at your school, but this process asks you to corroborate your 'feelings' with evidence.

There is *no requirement* that you act on the feedback offered in the coaching comment. You can *choose* to reply to a coaching comment within the system, or by email or phone if you wish, but you are not required to do so. You can choose to revisit or revise your work if you wish to make it more explicit or persuasive, but do only what you find helpful *for your own benefit!*

**One more thing:** if you have hired a consultant to help you with your restructuring process and would like them to have coaching privileges, please send me their contact information (Name, email, phone, school) and I'll arrange to get the proper logins assigned.  
([karenlaba@comcast.net](mailto:karenlaba@comcast.net); [karen.laba2@doe.nh.gov](mailto:karen.laba2@doe.nh.gov))

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### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Over the course of the past year working with the 2010 cohort of restructuring planning year schools and continuing with your group, I've received a variety of inquiries asking for advice about how to conduct the work. Generally my replies are on a phone call or in an email. It occurred to me recently that those who aren't asking questions might still find the advice helpful.

These few entries are just the start of what I anticipate will be a full suite of questions and answers. For convenience, I'm going to organize them according to the phase of the continuous improvement cycle where they best fit, starting with an overview of the *Steps*

process, moving to establishing a team and on to assessing current practice. Some of the answers will be familiar -- in a flash of inspiration last year I began capturing common questions into the guidance documents you've received so far and will receive as you move through the *Steps* system. Here, I've tried to stick to the "short and sweet" principle so if you find the information insufficient, review the full guidance material or give me a call.

## **Steps to Success FAQs Latest Update 10.04.11**

### A. The Steps to Success Process

*QA1: How can I find out about the Steps process?*

*AA1: We held an orientation in May for new schools in restructuring (SINI4) status as of the 2011 AYP release. At that meeting we reviewed the requirements, the process and provided a brief orientation to the Steps to Success tool. The presentation for that meeting is posted on the Department website on the Title I page. That presentation may answer some of your questions.*

*QA2: Do we just need to fill in the Steps tool for all 82 Rapid Improvement Indicators?*

*AA2: First, one clarification: the improvement planning \*process\* is not defined by the Steps to Success tool. The process begins with thoughtful and candid assessment of current practices compared to indicators of effective practice which are the backbone of the Steps tool. The assessment occurs in conversation among members of the school community examining their work from all perspectives. This is where the work of a facilitator of the school's process comes in. Team/ school leaders can serve as facilitators, or districts can hire external providers to help the school team get the greatest benefit from their conversations.*

*Guidance developed for use with the 2010 restructuring planning year cohort will be / is being sent to the current cohort via a periodic newsletter, SINI 4 Spotlight!, as well as by email to a distribution list consisting of school/ team leaders and any consultants, facilitators or district liaisons who were included in the initial Steps registration.*

### B. Establishing a School Improvement Team

*QB1: Who should be on our team? We are a very small school!*

*AB1: In the ideal, a restructuring team should include representatives of the school, district/LEA, parents/ guardians and community. In the August 2011 issue of SINI 4 Spotlight! there is an article describing the responsibilities of members of the team to communicate with the group they represent. Recruit team members who will commit to making sure communication is two way – from the team to the staff AS WELL AS from the staff to the*

*team. A team can be 5 members, 9 members, or 15 members depending on existing demands on staff time and other initiatives under way.*

*A special caution for administrators – a common observation in any group is that members will be very happy to let the leader take on all the responsibility for the work.*

*“Restructuring” is all about making “fundamental reforms” in the way the school is governed – who is responsible and accountable for carrying out the educational mission of the school. The restructuring team gives administrators an ideal opportunity to make a ‘fundamental reform’ – to distribute leadership across the staff!*

*QB2: We don’t have enough staff to assign a “process manager.” Can the Principal / Team Leader take on that role?*

*AB2: Of course the principal can take on the role of “process manager,” but heed the caution in answer AB1. Distributing responsibility for completing the work builds ownership and commitment to the product of the process.*

*QB3: The principal of our school is very busy this year. Our District liaison has offered to help out with the team and will lead the group. Is that ok?*

*AB3: See the preceding answers and judge for yourself. The greatest benefit, buy-in and commitment to the process of continuous improvement comes when the individuals responsible for the change that must take place are directly responsible for identifying what that change must be. Keep your eyes open for teacher-leader candidates to step up to the plate or share leadership of the process with a busy principal.*

### C. Moving from Assessing Current Practice to Developing a Plan

*QC1: Our school is in restructuring because of math. Can we just examine the indicators related to math?*

*AC1: I expect you'll soon notice that the indicators are all about best practices, which apply to every subject area. When you rate the level of implementation of each indicator, ask yourselves whether the practice is evident in all classrooms (including resource rooms!) Sometimes, you will notice that there are differences between the way things work in math lessons versus reading lessons.*

*There's an example in the "Mt Adams" entries you can see by logging in to [nhsample/nhsample](#) and looking at indicator IIA02. Share the examples (Mt. Adams info for IIA02, IB04 and IIC05) with your staff if you think it helpful.*

*The differences in strengths and gaps you notice between subject areas, grade levels, and service areas (eg SWD) will figure into your PLAN after you've looked at priorities.*

**TO BE CONTINUED . . .**

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## Linking Indicators to Outcomes

*[originally posted November 2010 Indistar® blog, now found in the archives of the Coaching for School Improvement blog, <http://coachingforschoolimprovement.blogspot.com>]*

Over the past decade, educators have committed much time and energy to becoming proficient data analysts. They have learned to use tools to “query the data” to better understand what students know and are able to do. Teachers and administrators have developed an appreciation for data – both qualitative and quantitative – and have come to value how it can inform their decision making.

One school recently introduced to Indistar (*Steps to Success*) worried that their investment in building their capacity to make good use of student achievement data would be diminished if they adopted Indistar and focused attention on the research-based indicators. How would their “data team” structure integrate with the “instructional teams” mentioned in the indicators? Would they still make use of the skills they developed to critically examine student outcomes across multiple measures?

We had a conversation about “inputs” and “outcomes” and looked at how the Indistar indicators can help schools make the connection between the “inputs” – curriculum, instruction, policies and practices – and the “outcomes” – student achievement. They recognized they often reach a point in their data analysis conversations where they know their students’ strengths and gaps with a high degree of confidence, but bog down at the question, “Now what?” We talked about how Indistar indicators can help them answer the “now what?” question by focusing on those educational practices that have demonstrated evidence of effectiveness.

We looked at one particular indicator to judge how Indistar might ‘fit’ into their data culture:

Instructional Teams use student learning data to plan instruction.

The school’s assessment of its current level of implementation of this practice can include questions such as: Do all teachers know how to use student data to adjust their instruction? Do all teachers group students based on their learning needs? Do teacher/ instructional teams check student performance frequently (local data, benchmark data, etc) to determine whether placements are appropriate and whether interventions are working?

Teams can examine student outcome data sorted by grade level, content area, and even classroom to see if patterns emerge that correlate with the strengths and gaps in practice identified by examining the Indicator. Do students in our after school program show strong math growth? Which math standards are most challenging for our fourth graders, and does that link with what we know about the instructional practices used by the fourth grade math teachers and interventionists?



They can rate this indicator a top priority to reinforce their school's data focus. Given their intensive investment in training teachers to become proficient in data analysis, they can select "relatively easy to address" for the opportunity rating.

The process of uncovering the core factors influencing student outcomes relies on professional wisdom, insight and experience. There is no single algorithm that substitutes for deep, rich, candid conversations.

### Regional Groupings

The table below lists the 2011 cohort of SINI4/ Restructuring Planning Schools in approximate geographic regions. If you're willing to host a gathering of restructuring team representatives at your location, contact your neighbors and me and we'll find a convenient time to come together to share the experience and learn from one another. The current contact list follows.

<b>West/ Upper Valley</b>	Haverhill	<b>Central/ South Central</b>	Grinnell (Derry)
	Canaan		Dr. Crisp (Nashua)
	Goshen Lempster		Rundlett (Concord)
	Lebanon		Beaver Meadow (Concord)
			Franklin
			Dupont (Allentown)
<b>East</b>	Woodman Park (Dover)	<b>North Country</b>	Hillside (Berlin)
	Newmarket ES		Brown (Berlin)
	McClelland (Rochester)		
	Valley View (Farmington)	<b>Southwest</b>	Troy
			Winchester

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I hope you find this newsletter helpful. Please contact me if you have suggestions for items to include in a future issue or recommendations for improvement. BE SURE to distribute this to your team members and others who might find this information useful. Thanks!

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[karenlaba@comcast.net](mailto:karenlaba@comcast.net)

**2011 SINI 4: Restructuring Planning Year Schools**

SCHOOL	ADDRESS TOWN/. CITY	Principal	
Hanover Street School	Hanover St. Lebanon	Scott Bouranis	<a href="mailto:sbouranis@sau88.net">sbouranis@sau88.net</a>
Dr Norma W. Crisp Elementary	50 Arlington St. Nashua	Jane Quigley	<a href="mailto:quigleyj@nashua.edu">quigleyj@nashua.edu</a>
Hillside Elementary	183 Hillside Ave. Berlin	Beverly Dupont	<a href="mailto:bdupont@sau3.org">bdupont@sau3.org</a>
Brown Elementary School	190 Norway St. Berlin	Amy Huter	<a href="mailto:ahuter@sau3.org">ahuter@sau3.org</a>
Beaver Meadow	40 Sewalls Falls Road Concord	John W. Forrest	<a href="mailto:jforrest@csd.k12.nh.us">jforrest@csd.k12.nh.us</a>
Rundlett Middle School	South St. Concord	Tom Sica	<a href="mailto:tsica@csd.k12.nh.us">tsica@csd.k12.nh.us</a>
Goshen-Lempster Coop	29 School Road Lempster	Ralph Peterson	<a href="mailto:rpterson@gl.k12.nh.us">rpterson@gl.k12.nh.us</a>
Grinnell Elementary School	6 Grinnell Rd. Derry	Mary Hill	<a href="mailto:mhill@derry.k12.nh.us">mhill@derry.k12.nh.us</a>
Haverhill Coop. MS	175 Morrill Dr N. Haverhill	Brent Walker	<a href="mailto:bwalker@sau23.org">bwalker@sau23.org</a>
Valley View Community School.	79 Thayer Dr. Farmington	Cynthia Sparks	<a href="mailto:csparks@sau61.org">csparks@sau61.org</a>
Franklin Middle School	200 Sanborn St. Franklin	Kevin Barbour	<a href="mailto:kbarbour@sau18.org">kbarbour@sau18.org</a>
Woodman Park School	11 Towle Ave. Dover	Patrick Boodey	<a href="mailto:p.boodey@dover.k12.nh.us">p.boodey@dover.k12.nh.us</a>
Newmarket ES	243 S. Main St. Newmarket	Scott Thompson	<a href="mailto:thompsons@newmarket.k12.nh.us">thompsons@newmarket.k12.nh.us</a>
Armand Dupont School	10 ½ School St. Allentown	Lynn Allen	<a href="mailto:lallen@sau53.org">lallen@sau53.org</a>
Indian River School	45 Royal Rd. Canaan	Kevin Towle	<a href="mailto:ktowle@mascoma.k12.nh.us">ktowle@mascoma.k12.nh.us</a>
Winchester School	85 Parker St. Winchester	James Lewis	<a href="mailto:jlewis@wnhsd.org">jlewis@wnhsd.org</a>
McClelland School	59 Brock St. Rochester	Arlene Walker	<a href="mailto:walker.a@rochesterschools.com">walker.a@rochesterschools.com</a>
Troy School	44 School St Troy, NH	David Dahl	<a href="mailto:ddahl@mrdsd.org">ddahl@mrdsd.org</a>